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On the subject of friends...

The only way I can understand it myself is, you can't plant a garden when you're traveling. To me, friendships are like flowers, you sow, you water, you enjoy the blooms, you invest your time. My ability to do that well ended when I divorced. Before '97, when I was home with Leah, and married, I had tons of friends, and it was wonderful. I was able to go places, do things, talk on the phone forever. I never intended to go for this long without being in a safe spot. Since my divorce, I've been on the move, facing one struggle after the next, and broke. My friendships have pretty much consisted of my coworkers along the way. I've deliberately let old friends slip away, it's better that way than to stay in touch, but never able to do anything. If I have the time, I don't have the money. If I have the money, I don't have the energy. If I have the energy, I might not have the words or the mental clarity, and if I don't have that, my self-esteem suffers.

People don't understand how hard it's been for me for the past decade to be social. In fact, a good friend of mine who moved to another state recently got so frustrated with me, she basically told me off, and I knew from the sound of her voice that she was cutting me loose. I understood her side better than my own. She was angry that I could never meet up and go anywhere. She was angry that I barely called her. All I could do was agree. She's right. A friendship I was barely able to maintain to begin with, ended with her feelings being hurt. Not what I intended at all. So am I that wrong to deliberately keep people at arm's length? Do you think I'm being selfish when I say, I don't have much to give?

I long for the day that I can be connected to people again, on a regular basis. But I need a different way. I can't try to fit in the generally accepted ways of doing things any more. I'm on a different page. I want and need more people in my life, but there has to be a way of meeting halfway. I don't know what that is just yet.

Another factor to consider, and I'm not asking for sympathy, is the things I said in my service to God over the past few years. It was a duty and an honor and I'm so glad I was able to get all that out. But if you were to take a look at some of the responses, you'd see why I don't open myself up online. I made that mistake already. There was a time when I never knew what type of abuse would be in my inbox. I realize that's to be expected, given the nature of some of the things I spoke about. I'm not surprised. But I'm saying this to remind you, I have every reason to find it easier in this world to just keep to myself. My heart has been hurting on this planet for just a little too long. I accept my reality, but I only have a limited amount of emotional strength. It's amazing that I can trust anybody at all.

Sometimes I keep people at a safe distance because of the God thing with me. I enjoy their company and conversation, but I can tell where they might be spiritually, and I

know that when and if they discover what I'm really all about, they'll reject me. Say for example, a friend I may have at work who's gay. We get close, then they discover the things I've said about homosexuality and Christianity. Then, there you have it- conflict and mistrust. Or, I may find myself close to a non-believer. To me it's a non-issue, but tension arises if they know about me and what all I've said. It's frustrating for me, because I long for friendships where I don't have to keep certain parts of myself hidden, just to keep everyone comfortable.

These things I'm mentioning are really old news to me. It's something I've accepted I think. It's a sad way to live, but I don't want to be hurt, and I don't want anyone else to be hurt by me. I do hope my life changes in this area. But I will not discredit myself and pretend to be something I'm not. If that leaves me with just a few people on this planet to have as friends, so be it.

It's strange though. I view my life before I divorced as a safe place to plant flowers, then, a chaotic journey began. Now it seems as if I've entered a quiet place once more. It's safe. I've come to that place, in my head. I do feel that I might have reached a point once more where I can plant some flowers, and I'll be there to enjoy them. I want to sit down on my path. I'm tired of running.